

Chapter I

DEATH AT GANKWE

WE HAD not thought to come upon death on our first night in the Suriname bush. What had killed Sedefo's brother no one could as yet say, for the time had not come to call upon the spirit of the dead man to speak. Death, said the Bush Negroes, was ravaging the family. Kunu, the law of retribution, the tool of ancestors and gods, had found this latest victim an easy prey to the black magic which had been invoked against him. In whispers they talked about a quarrel at work with a man who had a powerful snake god. [154]

"The man's family kunu and the enemy's Aboma god," we heard as a refrain to the low muttering.

There would be dancing all that night for the spirit of the dead, the natives told us, and they asked if we did not wish to come and honor the dead. But an old man objected. "Let them wait until tomorrow," he said, "let them wait until they are rested. To face the spirit of the dead their own spirits must be strong." [609]

That night whenever we stirred in our sleep we strained for the sound of the drums, but the wind blew from the east, and though Gankwe, where the dead man lay in state, was but a ten-minute run down the rapids, we could hear nothing. In the morning, however, we heard them plainly, heard the invocations drummed by the grave diggers on their way to the burial ground deep in the bush on the opposite bank.

Osio tintin
Osio be'e dyo.

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[p. 2 contain no textual material]

DEATH AT GANKWE

Ahead of us and all about were the various shades of 000 darkness which go to make the jungle darkness on a moonless night—the dark water, the dark branch of a liana which our paddlers skirted as if by magic, the dark wall of forest, and the dark horizon. But soon there was foam on the water, and then all the darkness seemed to break and come to life. We heard the drums plainly, and the rattles, the singing voices, and the chorus of approbation from the young onlookers, breaking into the song. We were nearing the rapids and Gankwe.

Up the bank, through the spiritual guard of palm fronds 764 which stretched across the path, and up the path we went to the great village clearing, where the principal houses are grouped and where stands the house for the dead.

In this open palm-thatched house the coffin, covered over with a white striped cloth, rested on a rough bier. Underneath the head of the coffin a calabash dish stood to receive the fluid of the putrifying body, while in front of the coffin a fire smoldered and to one side a hammock was slung where Sedefo, or in his absence an elder of the village, lay to guard the dead. The drummers and some elders sat in front of the house facing the phalanx of singers seated on their low stools some ten feet away from them. There were perhaps fifty women singing, and as many standing about to the left ready to begin dancing again, or just standing by to mark the rhythm with hand clapping and a slight swaying in place. Here and there, hung upon forked sticks which had been planted in the ground or placed on the ground beside a stool, were a few lanterns. They cast a pale shadowy light and brought into relief the ceremonially oil-anointed shoulder of one, the shining anklets of another, a brilliant red strip of cloth, the intricate pattern of another's hairdress.

With our coming the singing and dancing had stopped. 609 The children grouped together moved toward us in a body, and then took to their heels, repeating this again and again, until the two or three we had already talked with at our camp took courage and squatted down at our feet. The older

REBEL DESTINY

609 people kept their distance, and among them some pithy
proverbs were spoken to bear upon the shortcomings of the
white man. One or two of them turned to repeat to the dead
what had been said, and there was great laughter. Sedefo
[775] came to assure us that the dead man liked it very much. For
the dead, it appeared, were especially susceptible to humor
and to exceptional occasions.

764 About us, or edging their way toward the the
298 younger men in their ceremonial dress, the toga-like cloth
covering their bodies, but leaving one shoulder bared for
respect, and the women in their knee-length *pangi*, or
[301] cloths, hanging from the waist, and their shining brass
rings reaching from wrist to elbow and from ankle halfway
up to the knee. Among the dancers, but standing somewhat
aloof, could be seen a man or woman with seed rattles about
[534] the ankles. These were the fine dancers. Of them our
informant had spoken when he said, "They dance well at
Gankwe."

764 Carved stools were placed for us facing the coffin a little
[352] to the left of the singers, where we could best see the danc-
533 ing. One or two lanterns were moved to give us better light.
The drummers, who had not left their places, took up the
rhythm again—one of the women had us know that the
spirit of the dead man had communicated to the spirits
of the drummers that he wanted to see the dancing re-
sumed. The singing began—a woman's falsetto voice and a
chorus; the hand clapping of the singers and bystanders
emphasized the basic rhythm. It was slow at first, then
quickened, and the dancing became more animated.

"They dance seketi," whispered our friends. "Later
they will dance awasa."

764 The dancing was confined to a comparatively small space.
535 It began with a barely perceptible motion of the feet of the
dancers to the rhythm of the drums and the hand clapping.
Then the feet began to execute figures in place, without
leaving the ground, the arms hanging loosely at the side.
This was continued for some time, until, arms flexed and
held rigid at the elbow, and knees bent but rigid, too, the

REBEL DESTINY

203 And did men speak into the horn, and sing? Would there be no harm to the *ak'a*—the soul?

[193] Their own trickster, Anansi, the spider, working with his fabulous cunning, could not have spun the stories about the whites faster than had the passing boats. From boat to boat, from boat to shore, from shore to village the news went. Had the white man come with guns, or had he come accompanied by many others, then, to be sure, it would have been a matter for the drums. But the vagaries of a white man coming with his wife are of no ritual concern. The drums would only sound on occasions of moment; to summon the men for a council of the clan or to ask, ritually, for the health of a chief; to tell of death; or to speak to the gods themselves. But for a white man with his woman, gossip was good enough to carry the news.

[534] Up and down the river, in the villages where they had visited the year before, many a woman to whom the Bakra had given a string of yellow beads, or a large glittering safety pin to put in her hair as an ornament, or, better still, a large tin can out of which her husband had fashioned a broad band to be worn on her arm, one which glistened as it reflected the pale light of the moon during a dance—such a woman heard of the coming of the Bakra with pleasure. She had them all, these gifts, safe in the carved calabash on which she had incised the sinuous lines of the snake spirit that gave her fertility, and now that the gourds were ripening once again, she would carve another to hold the new things that the whites would bring her.

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648 The young men, too, heard of their coming with pleasure. For would not the strange ways of the Bakra and his woman give them many witty new things to put into words and sing to the traditional *seketi* tunes, the secular songs that they would later sing in the intervals of the religious dances? It was good to make up new words, which made a man the center of the dance. *Ambe!* But the women loved the man who could put clever new words to their dance songs!

The children heard the news with fear, for at four, at five, they were not too young to have learned of the enormi-

WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

ties of the white men of long ago and the deeds of their
slave ancestors, who had won for them freedom in this bush. 609 ●
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But what of the old men? What of them who govern and
know proverb and parable to fit all ceremonial occasions,
whose word is final in clan councils? What of those who
call the gods and speak to the ancestors and who, surpassing
all else in wisdom, know how to control *obia*, the great
healing spirit which Nyankompon, the Sky God, created
after he had brought earth and water into being, so that
man might live? At the landing place of the balata camp, a
group of such men were gathered and stood about talking.
A Loango elder who was on his way to visit his relatives at
Kadyu, his lower river clan village, had espied a clansman
on the shore and had come up in his boat.

"A man and a woman came. And they are going up the
river until . . . until beyond the Mamadam and Baikutu,
until . . . past the Felulasi Falls, until . . . they come
to the Tapa Water and into the Pekien Rio, and until . . .
they arrive at the Granman's village."

The speaker, a younger man who had come from up river
to the death ceremonies at Gankwe spoke with a certain
eagerness, and made of the telling a long recital, drawing
out the singsong word "*te*"—until—more and more with
each repetition, and in this way intensifying both the
distance and the hardships in these vast and vaster stretches. 609
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"Ayo! A long way. Will the Ga'ma' let them come?"

"Ya-hai, tio! You must ask, will the gods let them come!"

"Kere, kere! You must ask if the ancestors will let them
come!"

"They carry no guns."

"Then they bring us their gods."

"Kweti-kweti! And that's what I don't understand. They
say they come to learn."

"By Andol! But what does that mean?"

"Well, they speak the proverb down below, they say:
'It isn't for nothing that the worm crawls from side to
side.'"

"Massa Neng'e, but it's true, true."

"The white man wants to get the black man's *obia*."

REBEL DESTINY

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"The whites have wars against each other. . . , "

"Our ancestors. . . "

Before the last speaker could finish, a man broke in with a prayer. His voice was conversational and sounded as though he were addressing someone present.

*"Great Sky God,
Kediamo, Kediampon,
Mother of the River,
Sacred ancestors,
Grant that if the white man comes for evil
His race end.
Grant that if the white woman comes for evil
Her womb wither, her line perish."*

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But the Loango headman shook his head and said, "The gods will deal with them, have no fear. Do you remember the man who was drowned at the Mamadam, and the one who died way beyond the Granman's country, and that other one, the soldier? They came with evil in their hearts. The gods killed them. The gods will deal with these, too."

And another said: "Let them go up the river. The gods know all. The ancestors know all. This is our land, and our earth spirits will protect us, and they will kill our enemies. This is our river. Our river gods will protect us, and kill our enemies. This is our bush. The gods of the bush are strong. The gods of the bush know their bush children. They know their children's enemies."

[186]

Then the Loango elder spoke again: "We have the gods from Africa. They are more than all gods. The African gods know all. They will watch over us. We have the obia spirits, the African obia spirits. Mati, friends, let them go up the river. Have no fear. Our gods are with us."

The men's soft, sober voices spoke the words without emotion. Theirs were the voices of destiny. Well might the answering chorus intone the affirmations, while the colloquy went on of leader and chorus, leader and chorus, now one taking up the main theme, now another. To us the cadenced speech came floating softly on the still air.

WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

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Toward us came Tenye, a young friend of last year, and two small boys. She had seemed but a child the year before when she had danced bandamba with the other little girls while the men were getting ready for the Kromanti dance. But now she looked quite grown, and instead of the small apron she had worn, was wearing a cloth of a woman. 882

"You've grown, Tenye."

"*Ay, a kisi bobbi kaba,*" one of the youngsters said. "She has her breasts already," and he went on to say that soon she would marry. "Two moons more," he said, showing two fingers.

"You will soon have many bracelets, Tenye, and when you dance you will be splendid."

"Ai," the boy went on speaking eagerly, "Abane will teach us how to dance when he comes back. He went to the French shore. Abane made Tenye, and he made me, too. I am Yamati, and he made Sabape, here." But they had not the same mother, nor did they live in the same village. "When I grow up," the child went on, "I will dance with seed rattles at my ankles. I will dance like Abane." The rattles his uncles would have to buy for him, or when grown he might buy them for himself, but his father would give him his gods when he was of age, and good dancing, too, was a thing of the gods. 883

"Who will get Abane's seed rattles, Tenye? Will you get them because you are the oldest child of the first wife?"

"Ah, no!" both she and the indomitable Yamati exclaimed at the same moment, and then both lowered their heads and would say no more, while the small Sabape looked away.

Now we had the year before discovered why we were so often met by young and old with the phrases, "I do not know," or better still, "*Massa Gadu sabi*—God alone knows," when it was evident that the speakers knew the answer very well indeed. The reason lay with the will of the G'an Yorka, or the G'an Zombi, or the Nana, as the ancestors are variously called. The ancestors it seemed had long 609 ●
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REBEL DESTINY

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123 ago, so long that no one knew just when it happened, instructed that no one might impart to another, a stranger, more than half of what he knew. Moreover, no young person dared to speak at all of the supernatural, and such matters as inheritance were regulated by the laws of the gods and ancestors, who punished infractions with the scourge of kunu—a term we were to hear so much in this Suriname bush.

302 Tenye's head as we looked down upon it was a mound of wool, with little braids, each no more than an inch or an inch and a half long, fastened by a bit of black thread, each braid pointing upwards. This was called "tatafi," we knew, and to change the subject we talked about the styles of hairdressing. A child's hair usually was closely cropped, [855] and the heads of both Yamati and Sabape looked as smooth as blackened gourds. Tenye's hair had been cut but a little while ago, a moon perhaps, when the braids had grown so long that it had been too much bother even to make the hair look well in the fashion of what was called the coiled head, or the earth furrow style. Both of these types of hairdressing consisted of braids which diverged from the center in many rows, appearing at the outer edge at intervals of one inch, or slightly more. These ends were caught up and rebraided around the head, to form either the one coil of "lollo 'ede," or the several coils of "gon wi." There were also the single long braids—the "pitto"—and the "pina bonso" way of hair combing, where the head when properly dressed makes a design of narrow strips of scalp showing between flat ribbons of braids, which look like so many snake vertebrae, radiating from the middle of the head outwards.

"When you come back from up river, I will dress your hair," said Tenye to both of us. "You," she said, pointing, "will become an obia man in your white country, and you will look so well that your husband won't ever remember to go to his other wives."

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754 But now Tenye's maternal aunt who had approached unobserved came to call the children away. She was not in

WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

good humor, and looked with disfavor on the friendly conversation between us. Her bad temper, we learned later, had earned for her the name of Mother Snake, given her by a witty town servant of a lumber factor. The idea of dressing our hair apparently appealed to the woman, however, for it would certainly only be a reckless white who would offer his hair for combing to a stranger, since with hair any number of supernatural things might be done. With the proper formula, a few hairs, and the required ingredients she might fashion an *opo*, let us say. Now an *opo* serves many purposes, but its essential quality is that it gives its owner power over the one whose essence is captured in the form of hair, or a scrap of garment, or finger nails, or whatever else had touched the person against whom one has designs. The power of the possessor of the *opo* is to dominate the will of the other, and its particular attribute might be to function in love, or in a court of justice, or in matters of getting employment, or of receiving gifts. But an *opo* would be the least dangerous consequence, for an *opo* is not to be conceived of as being in the category of bad magic. There is the danger of *wisi*—a word which has the double meaning of poison and black magic—and hair, or finger nails, or the menstrual cloth of a woman, or perspiration are the very best materials for working *wisi*.

And so the good woman, known when she was among us as Tita, and as Mother Snake otherwise, saw that we offered no cause for alarm and added her advice to Tenye's in pointing out powers which we might acquire and use to spectacular advantage in our white country.

"Yes, you must make *pina bonso*," she said, adding her approval, "and then your husband will prefer you to his other wives. But if you want to keep him all to yourself, you must let us cut *kamemba*—cicatrized designs—on you. An *ingi kodjo* here on each cheek to begin with," turning to Tenye and smiling.

And so it was all planned. The Indian cudgel, a euphemism for the buttocks, and procreative symbols were to be

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REBEL DESTINY

609 given to the white woman when she returned from up river,
304 yet with it all the thighs would still need to be cicatrized.
"Then," she said, speaking of the cicatrized thighs,
"then he simply won't think of any one else, because among
you, you will be the only one. We who all have the ka-
memba must see that it looks well, but you will be the
only one."

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123 The boys remained with us, amusing themselves by
609 giving us their words for the various objects about us.

341 The strings about their waists, which formed their only
304 clothing, the fiber cord with the bell about Sabape's neck,
the word for garter, and machete, and shoes, boxes, and
water jar, and all else they could see were named. A
flashlight was a diamond fire, and a collapsible chair a
hammock chair, and if we showed them something they
had never seen it was a *Bakra sani*—a white man's thing.

Sabape spoke little, for he was a timid child and
looked sluggish. He had but few cuts on his body, while
Yamati, who was about the same age, had already several
fully outlined designs.

"Why have you nothing about your neck, Yamati?"

"Oh, but I have. I have cuts. You can either have an
obia cut, or an *obia tetai*—a string. It is to make us live.
All children have it."

"And when do they start making kamemba?"

"A long time ago they start. If it doesn't hurt too much,
they cut one more, and soon one more. But if it hurts too
much, they wait until . . .," he said, finishing on the
word *te* . . . in the characteristic way of the grown
narrator who uses the monosyllable to intensify space and
time and danger and bounty.

123 Yamati found so much delight in his rôle as teacher that
609 he became stern with us and had us say the words over
again and again. There was the word for firefly which
pleased him not at all. "*Mi taki, mi taki-e, azoka-nywye*—
I say, I am saying . . ." ("if you would but listen," his voice

WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

implied), and he repeated the word over and over, until this led us to talk about singing, and at last we had them consent to dance *susa* for us. It had to be done very quietly, in the slight clearing in back of the shelter. *Susa* is an African dance. It is danced by men only, in pairs, and is something of a game. The one who wins "kills" his opponent. The earth spirits are said especially to like it, and it is danced in the fields or in the villages for them. 123 609 535

There they stood, Yamati and Sabape, facing each other, their enlarged navels almost touching. One agreed to be "in," and one "out," and as they began, their jaws came forward in a patterned, pugnacious way, and their arms moved to reproduce in pantomime shield and spear, while the feet crossed and recrossed. 535 524

Kesi-kesi g'a S'ia

Zond'o lingo

Lingo-li

The monkeys

Go to dance susa

Without rings.

Huk, huk, huk!

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They sang the song over and over again, panting at the end of each verse to dramatize combat.

"I killed him," said Yamati. He had won, and they began again. If the one who had agreed to be "in" had his foot on the outside as they clashed, then he lost—he was killed.

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As they were dancing, we noticed a young man we had never seen before. He was standing watching the youngsters at their play, smiling as though he enjoyed their contest. He was very dark, even for a Bush Negro, short and stocky, with unusual muscular development of arm and chest and thigh. His age, one would judge, was nineteen or twenty. He turned his smile on us when he realized we were noticing him. 439

WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

Had we provided ourselves with the necessary obias with which to travel to the country of the Granman? He had never been so far up the river. He would like to go there. ⁴³⁹
 Ai-yol He would like to go and see Dahomey, the sacred ⁷⁸⁹
 city, and look at the Tapa Wata falls, and visit the Gran- ⁴⁸⁴
 man's village. Did we have all our paddlers? He was strong, and he liked to make a boat walk up the rapids. He could get his father to come with him as steersman. His father had strong obias and knew the river. We could not go until the river went down, but he would stay with us here and wait, and if we wished it he would go back upstream to his village and get his father and food, and be ready for us in time. He needed the money the Bakra would pay, too, for he wanted to be married soon, and he would have to buy many things for his woman and her mother.

When he left us, he went to one of the little enclosed houses that were there for travelers, choosing the one closest to us, and built a small fire. His younger brother and the white dog that came in his boat sat with him. The dog wore a cord about his neck, covered with red ochre, to keep him safe in the bush. That night as we ate we could see Bayo, his brother, and the dog squatting close to the fire and eating, too. And all the next day, and for several days to come, as we waited, Bayo was with us, talking, laughing, explaining, and making and buying obias for us to carry us safely on our journey to the Granman. [231]

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In the afternoon one of the political chiefs of the neighboring Christian village came to hear our phonograph. But when we asked him to sing into it, he said, "Ask me later. Now I am alone. We Saramacca people never do anything when we are alone." We had the year before acquired a powerful obia against slander and bearing false witness against us, and found the occasion useful for corroborating the invocation we had been given. The man, however, spoke with the greatest reluctance and looked

REBEL DESTINY

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123 vastly relieved when he saw several boats pull up at the shore.

It appeared that these newcomers were also interested in our phonograph, but that no one would consent to be the first to sing, until at last a young boy came up.

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991 "I'll sing for you," he said, and it was at once whispered that the boy came from a family of powerful obia men, that he was sure of his spirit. "I'll sing, yes, but you must let me tell the machine something first."

What he said was an invocation to his soul and his personal gods, and he spoke it by putting his face into the horn of the phonograph and talking in a rapid whisper, making audible the one phrase: "Bakra obia isn't my obia." Subsequently when we discussed this occurrence with older men, they made the matter clear to us. He had assured his spirits that he was not conceding anything to our magic, and that they were neither to feel slighted nor to relax their vigilance. The gods favored the strong and the proven, and a young man had to be careful, for the gods were not conceived as especially logical or rational or inexorably just, so that one had to guard against becoming the victim of their caprice.

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123 Boat after boat pulled up at the shore, and up the road came a long line of callers. Women with infants straddling their backs, a breast drawn to the side so that the child might feed as it rested there; children with cords about their waists; young girls and boys, each with a square of apron across the front, or a loin cloth; and the men with togas and paddles, dignified and solemn, drawing nearer silently.

On our provision boxes sat those who had come early, particularly women nursing children, or old women who looked on with tired wonder. On the floor everywhere about our feet and against the posts sat the children we knew, while those who had come for the first time and were still fearful kept their distance, hiding behind some relative.

It was a great occasion, a spectacle of white man's magic, and they were there to verify it for themselves. Now there

WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

was much of white man's magic that was not astonishing. Old men and young men had heard of machines with people on them that flew like birds, but had they not their own stories about the sacred vulture, the *opete*, that carried one of their warrior ancestors away from slavery across the river and into this bush? He had simply mounted the bird and said to it, "On your back is my home. You can fly over land, and you can fly over water. I have no boat. You must carry me." And the *opete* took him. Then there are beings with wings that range the sky, and some of them are birds, and some of them are spirits. No, a machine that flew like a bird was not astonishing magic. Then there was the *kino*—shadows appearing and moving about like the living—that you could see in the cities. Men on the French shore, too, had seen the *kino*, but it was a gift any man might have to see things. But here was something which talked back at you. . . .

"Ke . . . !"

"Massa Nen'ge!—Master Nigger!"

"Ma Nen'ge . . . !"

And even our town servant exclaimed, "*Mi Gado*—My God!"

Now all this was very well, except that the Bakra, not satisfied with the ordinary *seketi* dance tunes, kept asking for Kromanti songs—the warrior-spirit songs—and the bush-god songs, and river-god songs. From one man and from another came the expected, "I do not know such songs." The women did not even dare approach the machine.

At last Apanto came. His hair was braided and he wore a jaguar tooth on a cord about his neck. He was not so muscular as other men of his age, and when he went about there was a softness in his movements that was unaccountably disquieting. His hands were not the hands of a worker of lumber, nor of a boatman who was accustomed to pole heavily loaded boats. They were smaller, and his fingers were narrow at the ends. Apanto, we discovered later, was what the Bush Negroes called a "tiger fighter." In a quarrel, he did not cuff and strike out with his fists, but

REBEL DESTINY

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scratched like a "tigri"—a tiger, for this is how the Bush Negroes name the jaguar. Later, when we saw him dance the Tigri Kromanti dance, we witnessed one of the most realistic feline interpretations imaginable. But that is another matter.

Now Apanto was an obia man to be reckoned with, and his fellow villagers and the villagers of neighboring settlements treated him with a deference that his age alone could never have commanded. And it was this Apanto who now came up and said that he would sing the sacred Kromanti songs for our phonograph.

"You will not understand the songs. They will be in the Kromanti language," he warned us. "They are strong, and the machine must be strong to carry them."

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It happens that a field phonograph is anything but strong. The mechanism is simple, since the instrument must be light enough to be carried about, and yet it often is subjected to all manner of hard usage. To this is added the hazard of the climate. The turntable is actuated by a belt running from the mechanism inside the case, and the ends of this belt are glued together. This, to be sure, we discovered later. At the moment, we met Apanto's challenge with assurance. We did not doubt that the machine was spiritually strong.

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What he said about the Kromanti language was true. The Kromanti tongo, of which we had been told during our first visit here, we were finding to be an actuality, and although we took down the words as he sang them, aided in hearing them by the repetitions, their meaning was unknown to us. Some of them we learned later. Some of them we knew. "Obia" we knew concerned the spirit, the vague force known by that name, while "Amba" was a deity sacred to Saturday, and was given as a "day name" to women born on that day of the week. This, then, is what he sang:

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"Ma djeni ye-ye
Obia kule ma djeni no-ko
Obia mo-ye

ON THE SARAMACCA RIVER

looking out on the river. Whether it was a gesture that he would sing no more, or not, we could not say, but when he turned again to us he looked thoughtful. "White man, how far away is Africa? Would they kill me if I went there? Could I get a woman, if I went there?" 126 115

We sent him some food to his boat as an expression of hospitality, and word came back that when we had done eating, he would himself come and thank us. When he did come, it was to speak his thanks and to say goodbye, and he did not come alone. With him was the young man who was his traveling companion, and this young man carried gifts to us. Bayo, who had arrived a short time before, received the gifts of fig bananas and rice for us, as was the custom of these people, for to have given or received a gift in person would have been the way of a boor, just as it would have been bad form to stand about and watch us eat. 609 576 431

The leave-taking ritual, as that of greeting, is as formalized as a litany and almost as solemn.

"*Adiosi, adioso—waka bon, yere. Tan bon*—Goodbye, travel well, hear? Keep well." Ajako carefully laid away his top cloth in his woven closed basket, straightened his loin cloth, and paddled away briskly from the landing.

Later, boats pulled up bringing the Gankwe men.

"Sedefo, we have a fine boat for you. It's large, and it will take a great deal of load. It's a new boat, just come down from top-side." 501 609

The men busied themselves with bringing our provisions from the shelter to the landing place so that the loading might begin. A tent had been made of palm leaves for the boat in which we ourselves were traveling, so that we might be shielded from the glare of the open river, from sunstroke and the sudden tropical downpours, and the men decided to load this boat first.

Now there was a murmur among the Gankwe men. Sedefo was passing his hands over the new boat, as though it were a human form, touching its "head," running his hands over the "ribs," the "belly." Then he balanced himself in it, and shook his head.

REBEL DESTINY

501 "It is not good," he said aloud to us. "Its balance is not
609 right. Look, it rolls . . . and besides, I have a kunu. I will
go up in my own boat."

And so it was. Sedefo took his own boat up river, and another Gankwe boat was obtained, and there were four boats instead of three, and eight paddlers instead of six.

"Ya-hai! Kunu is costly for the white man as well as the black," Bayo said to Bibifo, his great-grandfather, for it was not his father, nor his grandfather, as he had later promised, who appeared to steer the boat in which Bayo was taking the Bakra and his woman up the river.

3

502 Bayo was at his best on the river. He loved it, and it
484 treated him well. In the prow of the boat, swinging his pole-stick hand over hand, he steadily urged the boat upstream against the current, and sang as he poled.

[533]
[534]

*"A-yai-yo,
A-yai-yea,
Money is finished in Suriname
Lower Cayenna took it!
A-yai-yo,
A-yai-yea."*

[533] Over and over he repeated the seketi, with tantalizing variations in rhythm and melody on the traditional air, to which he knew so many sets of words. In and out went the pole-stick. In, until it struck the sand with a soft caressing glide, then a hard push, and three short steps back along the boat until Bayo's hand reached the upper end of the wood, and a final thrust, then pull, and over, and in, and once again the three short steps.

The other boats had got ahead. In the distance close to the bank they followed one another.

"Mbwogu, mbwogu—Hurry!" said old Bibifo in back.

Bayo turned and grinned. "Ai, mbwogu, mati, mbwogu—Yes, hurry, friend, hurry," he twitted his great-grandfather,

REBEL DESTINY

502 too deep for the pole-stick. When we go in the center, it is
48A slow. . . . *Koti gal*—Cut across!" he shouted in his shrill voice, as our boat and the others after us veered over to the other side of the stream where the current was less strong.

"How do you know just where these places are?" we asked. "There are so many channels, so many islands. How can you tell?"

"*Ma, kye!* What would you? I belong to this bush. An old man knows his river."

Steadily the boats went ahead in this long, quiet stretch. For fully half an hour the men worked in silence, doggedly going upstream close to the bank, until under the shade of a tree they saw a boat resting.

"Tio, odi! Tio, odi!" Each of our men addressed the two in the boat.

576
609 "Tangi, tio! Tio, odi," they answered each one, until finally they said, "Odi, Bak'a," greeting the stranger last, as was the custom.

Our men explained, "We are going to the Saramacca country, up the river to the Granman. We are carrying the Bakra to the Granman. They belong to America country. They traveled in a fire ship for twenty-one nights and days to come to the Saramacca. Twenty-one nights and days, mati, without resting. *G'an sundyi*—A great state of affairs."

The man said, "We come from the Marowyne. The river is high. The next rapids are difficult. Let us travel together."

And so we were five canoes. Ahead, we could already hear the dull murmur which would soon crescendo to the final roar. This was the water pouring over the first rocks in the distance.

"What rapids are these?"

803
796 "We must not talk about this here. Wait until we pass them. If we speak the name, the spirit will come, and he will be angry. The boat might go over. We might lose part of our load."

Now we came closer to the line of white, which rose higher and higher. Except for the bits of white foam like

KUNU

"*Na wa' taki: Efi gbuli wolo, i sa si san de na ini.*—It is said: If a person stirs up a hole, he will find what is in it." 538

And so it was that very night, when we were camped on an island near the great falls, with the roar of the water sounding in our ears like the very signal drums we were told the river gods wanted sounded that the sun might come and warm and dry them after the long rains, that we learned more. Kasanya, the captain of the fourth boat, had conducted himself so unobtrusively that we barely knew he was there. He was almost as old as Bibifo, but strangely silent. He was tall and spare, with graying hair, and eyes that were rimmed with red. We had not sought him out particularly to make conversation with him because he had ugly, open sores on his body, the result of a virulent case of bush yaws, which showed when he sat paddling in his loin cloth. We had known him during our first year when he had been more willing to be friendly, more ready to talk. From him, in fact, we had learned to play one of the Bush Negro games that the ancestors had brought from Africa. 124 [177] [524]

Kasanya came over to ask us whether we had medicine for him. His head ached so until . . . he could barely see. There is that about white man's medicine in the bush, it is to be had free, and there is no harm in trying it. 123 609

"Will you make us a game board like the one we bought from your village last year, Kasanya?" we asked him.

"Yes, but you must have two of them, one flat and one curved like a boat. It is not good to have only one. When a man is alive he plays the game. When he dies and comes back to visit the living, he wants to play, too. Now if there is a board for him, he will play on that. But if there is but the one, he will play with the living and that is not good." 775 524

"You know a great deal, Kasanya."

"Awa, yes, but I'm an old man already. I've had much trouble. Last year after you left the third son I made died. Now I have no one. Kunu has taken the three of them, and my wife is asleep, too." [776]

REBEL DESTINY

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609 In his own house, Fandya continued to urge our staying.
"Ame'ika Fandya," he said—the year before he had given his own name to the white man—"remain with us tonight and tomorrow. I am an old man. I would like to know that you saw a dance in my village. When you go to the Neng'e country, I would like you to say that Captain Fandya knew how to treat a stranger who came as a friend. Last year when you were here you said you would come with your wife. You have come. Your wife has come. Last year you came, and since then all has gone well in our village. Today there are not many people about. The women are
[462] away in the fields harvesting the rice; the men are in the bush hauling lumber. But tomorrow night the women will come in from the planting grounds, because the day after they may not work in the fields, and tomorrow, too, the men will come. Stay and see our dances."

And the bassia, the man second in command, said,
[789] "Mati, last year I took an obia against the evil eye from my own door and gave it to you to hang over yours, that enemies entering your house might not bring in with them bad magic. All has gone well with you. Stay. The gods have shown they favor our friendship."

2

361 The will of the Gankwe men had, however, prevailed, and we reached the village of Pa'aba that day in good time. It was one of the largest on the river. In front of the azang
501 which guarded the road new boats lay on their sides, and farther up the path were others in the making, some black inside with charring, others huge hollowed-out logs, like gigantic drums, waiting for the hand that would set their pulses beating. These boats were as large as any we had seen on the river, as large as the boat Sedefo had rejected because it rolled and he had to think of his kunu.

[556] Kasanya said, "This is a prosperous village. They make the best boats on the river here."

And Bayo said, "Ai, this village has strong men."

REBEL DESTINY

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In the doorway of one of the huts, a woman squatted over a fire, and at her feet a child sat busying itself with pushing the firewood toward the center. Our cook had planted two forked sticks in the ground, and on them had hung our lanterns, so that we could see the woman silhouetted against the fire and the naked child on the ground singing the *seketi* which Bayo had sung for us so many times on the river. Over and over the child tried the air, her mother humming it for her softly, while from the doorway of another house a man sat watching them. We had not noticed him until the lanterns had come. The planting ground at harvest time is not a place a man frequents. He was a strange figure there on his low stool, as he sat wrapped to his neck in a large striped cloth. He made not the slightest move, uttered not a single word. But for his cough, he might have been a corpse propped up in the doorway. We stood hesitating whether to cross the short distance between us and the fire to greet the woman and the man, but before we could come close enough to them to speak, we heard Bayo calling us in a voice we had never heard him use in a strange village.

"Bak'a, Bak'a. Come. They want you inside." When we were out of earshot of the woman at the fire, he said in a whisper, "Do not go over to those houses. Tomorrow when we are away from here, I will tell you why. It is for that I called you."

[164]

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We had no need, however, to puzzle over Bayo's warning. Our cook, who had heard the conversation of the men, told us that the man in the doorway was a leper.

"You know how it happens, Massa? Among us townspeople it is this way. A child inherits a *trefu* from his father. It is one thing, or many things, he must not eat. If he eats what he should not, then he sickens. We know a person who has eaten his *trefu* by the spots that come out on his skin. If a man goes on eating the things which are his *trefu*, then the spots become worse and worse. He becomes a leper. So that's how it is."

He did not at once answer the questions we put to him.

REBEL DESTINY

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428 brothers and to his sisters' children. That is how we live here in the bush. That is how we do."

4

591 When a man marries, he either arranges to take his wife to live in his own village—his mother's village—or to stay in that of his wife. Whether he chooses the one village or the other, he has to build a house there for her, and this becomes her *wosu*, her household. If he wishes, he may build two houses, one in his own village, and one in the village of his wife. Kasanya's younger brother built two houses for his first wife. One was on the lower river, next to Kasanya's own house, and the other we would reach after two days' further travel up the river.

Yet the man, explained Kasanya, if the couple were living in the village of the wife, or the woman, if their house was in his village, was not entirely at home. In one's own village a person was a *gomi*, a child of the "ground." He belonged there. But when living in another's village, even though it was that of a husband or wife, one was a [609] *wakama*, a stranger, and if a man of the village but uttered this word "*wakama*" to such an individual, the outsider had to take up his belongings and leave at once. Were the [688] stranger, in turn, to speak aloud the word "*gomi*," disaster would follow, for the earth spirits, having been disturbed, would be sure to take their toll.

594 The *wosu*—the household—is the unit of family life, whether, in its physical location, it is in one village or two villages. In it a woman lives with her husband, and here the children are reared. After the *wosu* comes the larger family unit, the *mbe*, composed of those who have come from the common womb of a more remote ancestress, while several of [614] these larger or extended families form a clan.

595 "If a man has more than one wife," said Kasanya, "then he makes more than one house. A man never puts two wives in the same house. It would not be good. Each woman has her own house, where she lives with her children. It must be so. The children of the first wife belong to her

REBEL DESTINY

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609 "The gods are friendly to you, Massa. The men have all noticed it. You look upon trees and falls with pleasure. When you see them, it is as if you met with a friend. That is good. But the gods have their powers, and men have theirs. The Rabbit says, 'Evil is everywhere.' Last night, you remember, there was a man who did not look up when you passed his house, and when you spoke 'Howdo' to him, he would not answer. He was an obia man. He would not take the hand of a white man. I have heard the men say there are others who are not glad that the white man has come so far, and that the gods have allowed it. . . ."

Abruptly he stopped. He had said more than he intended.

"I came to tell you about another thing," he continued after a moment of embarrassment. "You should know about fio-fio."

[153] Fio-fio was a small brown bug, and it was also a spirit. The spirit fio-fio brought sickness and death to human beings. For people like ourselves, untutored in the ways of the spirits, and the things which allowed them to gain sway over an individual, only a diviner could seek out the incident which had caused fio-fio to come.

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783 That was why it was necessary to bathe in a protecting fluid, to "wash fio-fio," even though we had not yet been stricken.

"Let me tell you how to wash fio-fio," he went on. "You must bathe when nobody sees you, and this is what you must have: the skin of a plantain we call the mother plantain that has been dried in smoke, and weeds which I will give you, and Negro-country pepper which I have with me, and seven pieces of chalk, and some eggshells. Some people put washing-blue in the water, too, but that you don't need. You can bathe in it early in the morning, or at noon, or right after sundown, but no one must see you."

He paused for a moment.

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578 "Do you not have fio-fio in your country? Look, this is how it is. You quarrel with a man who works for you, and he comes back and says he is sorry, and you say you are

REBEL DESTINY

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186 gods do not come to them." There was in her voice contempt for women who had no gods. She was of a reddish-brown color, taller and more slender than most, and the great coils of brass about her arms and ankles told that her beauty had had full recognition. These had come to her at marriage, as had the small earrings of gold which the bassia had brought to her from French Guiana. With these, too, had come cloths and handkerchiefs, beads and carvings.

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[585] If white women had no gods, did they know any of the other things which women must know? Did the white woman wear an apron underneath all her cloths, as women should? Were her thighs cicatrized? Did she cook for her husband, or other men, when she should be isolated in the special house provided for women's monthly visits?

[841] Did she purify herself with sacred clay when she emerged from isolation in order not to spoil her husband's obias, for which contact with a woman who has her menses is the deadliest taboo? Why, having borne children, did her figure not show it?

[534] "Have you drums?" the bassia's wife asked. "Without drums, how do you pray? How do you dance?"

[535] Dancing without drums availed nothing.

"White women have no gods. The gods do not come to them. They are not troubled by the need to dance. White women do not pray," she concluded, seeing that what dancing the white woman did could only be a feeble affair.

"I will send my son to your country. The men who go to the French shore say it is good to know how to count the white man's way. My woman-child I will never send," she finished with finality.

Now it was the white woman's turn to ask a few questions, having done explaining how her boots laced, and why it was that she was dressed very much as her husband was dressed.

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983 The white clay in the hair and on the face of a small child was medicine. The child's mother had washed for her god that morning. He was a god whose day for dancing was Wednesday, and now, feeling the god stir in her, she would

AT THE COURT OF THE GRANMAN

house he told of, beside carvings of their Negro ancestors, 123
and then ask money from people who came to see?

Ambel Was that what white people did to come into money?

From the provision grounds canoes filled with women 123
would dart toward us, and Bayo would call to us, as the 609 ●
women cried their greetings, "Stand up, both of you.
The women want to look at you."

The women's requests were, apparently, not to be ignored. Hurriedly we would climb out from inside the tent and balance ourselves on our knees over the tarpaulin-covered load in front of the boat.

"Look! Look! . . . There are two men! It is not true that the white man brought his woman!"

Like a master showman, Bayo would stand there in the bow, his pole-stick poised for the next stroke, all his teeth showing.

"Take off your sun helmet, white woman," he would then say.

"Mother of all Negroes!"

"By Ando!"

"Her hair is yellow! She belongs to the river gods!"

"Is it that way they live in the white man's country? Do they not know the difference between men and women, that they both dress alike?"

Again Bayo had a ready answer.

"A white woman who travels in the bush dresses like a man. So they do in the white man's land."

"Master Nigger! Men and women wearing the same clothes!"

When Bayo decided that the women's curiosity had been satisfied, he would say his goodbyes to them with a flourish and, bearing down on the top of his pole-stick, would push away.

Soon we would hear Bayo's summons again.

"Come out. People want to see you."

This time there would be both men and women in the boats which had come circling about us, and the questions, exclamations, and Bayo's replies were heard afresh.

AT THE COURT OF THE GRANMAN

stopped to change their clothes, and make themselves fit ⁵⁷⁶ for the reception by the Granman.

We had been warned that these preparations were not to be slighted. Those who had been to the village of the Granman told many stories of the impressiveness of the ceremonial life, and the dignity of those who were there. It was the seat of government, the home of a potentate. A visitor, whether a village chief or a man from the city, had to keep in mind that he was to appear at court. Etiquette demanded that the traveler, once arrived at the island which now hid us from the Granman and his assembled villagers, debark, remove the stains of hard traveling, and dress in a manner befitting the reception which awaited him. <sup>576
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But the gods had planned otherwise.

At this time of the year, though the heavy rains were ¹³² over and the showers were becoming less and less frequent, it did sometimes happen that the clouds gathered at midafternoon and rain fell. To the northeast, behind us, we had seen the clouds massing, and now they hung low and glowering.

"It will rain," Sedefo called to us, just as we were making ready to see to a change of clothes, and an instant later the storm broke. With a kind of hurricane force which sent the branches toward the earth, and flares of lightning and crashes of thunder, the deluge was upon us. Not since our first days in the bush had we coped with a rain like this. The water poured down as though some giant hands were turning over endless vessels. Our tent seemed to have been taken as unaware as we were, for having sheltered us in many hard storms, it was now inadequate to keep out the downpour. We drew our raincoats tighter about us to keep off the water which came through the thatch.

Under the trees of the island the Bush Negroes were ¹²³ huddled. Their favorite top cloths were still in their baskets, safe out of the wet under the white man's tarpaulins. No chance now to put them on, or to use the oil ^[302] which they had jealously saved for making their faces and

AT THE COURT OF THE GRANMAN

Both of these men carried long wands of office, of black wood topped with silver knobs. About their necks were heavy silver chains, and from each chain was suspended a large silver crescent. 292
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Another man stood near them to one side. He wore a long coat of white edged with scarlet and blue. He carried no stick, and wore no insignia. On his head, over a white kerchief wound tightly about the head and caught up in the back, was a white sun helmet. Above his head, held by one of the younger men who accompanied him, was an umbrella, the highest emblem of rank. It betokened that this man was Moana Yankuso, Granman of the Saramacca people. 55A
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Kasanya was first out of the boat when the dugouts were brought to shore, and after him came Bibifo. Sedefo and Asikanu remained with the younger men, waiting for the Granman to indicate that he wished to receive them. Only men of rank and elderly members of his own clan would go at this time to speak to the headman, who stood there watching the boats. 622
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[55A]

"We came, G'aman," we heard Kasanya say, "and we brought the Bak'a." Two or three low-voiced sentences followed, and then the conversation was terminated by the elderly functionary in the yellow coat, who came down to our boat.

"I greet you in the name of the G'aman, Bak'a," he announced. "The G'aman himself awaits you. Come with me."

As we stepped out of the boat, the hallooing of the women and the shouts of the children, which had stopped when the paddlers addressed the Granman, began once again, and, as an underlying voice, the salutes from the shotgun were to be heard. The old man, shifting his wand of office to his left hand, now carefully helped first the one, then the other out of the boat and, offering his arm to each in turn, led us to the top of the steep rise, until we were face to face with the Granman. It would have been unlucky had we lost our footing at this moment of welcome. This chieftain was 574
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REBEL DESTINY

574 there not only to tender the courtesy due the guests of the
576 tribal head, but to see that no such mishap occurred to
609 them.

643 When we had both gained the ascent, he turned to the Granman.

"Headman Yankuso, the Bak'a is before you."

As though just become aware of us, Yankuso fixed us with his eyes, fastening his glance on each in turn.

"Odi, white man. White woman, odi!"

[29] A great figure of a man he was, as he stood there. Tall and massive of build, he towered over those who surrounded him. Barefooted like the rest, there was that in his bearing which was the way of a man who was accustomed to obedience, whose word was final. He was pure Negro. His skin was dark. In his features there was no hint that the lineage of this ruler held any of the blood of the white masters, nor that his ancestors numbered among them Indians who had given way before his invading forbears. His face was impassive, yet underneath the outward immobility was an alertness which the glistening, oil-anointed skin made the more alive. His speech was measured, his words articulated with studied emphasis, which gave to each of them the value of a completed image.

"Bari—Cry out!" he called to the women in his vibrant voice. "Halloo, give the welcome of the bush to the people who came."

Amid the renewed cries which his command brought, we turned from the river bank and walked slowly up the path toward the village, past the silk-cotton tree, past the shrine to the ancestors, until we reached an open place on which fronted half a dozen thatched buildings.

"This is my house, white man," he said, pointing to it. "I will put you near me. I will put you in the council house."

344 The council house at Asindopo Lantiwe—the village of Asin, the seat of government—was unlike any we had seen.

AT THE COURT OF THE GRANMAN

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Outside the doorway we heard a decisive clearing of the throat, louder than the coughs we had already learned to associate with the approach of a visitor. After a short pause, the Granman's bulk filled the low entrance, and with him came the elder in the yellow coat, followed by Sungi of Dahomey, the chief who had come to pilot us to the village of the Granman, and the bassia from S'ei.

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The men stood with ceremonially inclined bodies until the Granman was settled in his chair, then each in turn took a bench from the shelf above the door, and still with body bent found a place for it against the wall facing the Granman.

After a silence, the Granman spoke.

"The unloading is done. I have set aside five houses for the Bak'a. Mati—friends—the white G'aman told me about this visit when I was in the white man's city. Others have told me. People who come to me must be cared for. The white people are come. They sit among you. The Bak'a and his woman will put up their hammocks here. Here they will stay. The white man's goods are stored in the house in back of mine. The white man has much goods. There is a man from the city who helps them. He will sleep where these goods are stored. So I speak. That is my wish."

"Ya-hai, G'aman," came the assent from And'u.

"Kelele," said the chief in the yellow coat.

"The house in back of this I have had the women get ready also for the white man and his woman. When the chiefs gather for councils, and they want to be alone, the whites must have a place to go aside. I have given a house for the cook, and an open house for the cooking. So it is. People who come to me must be cared for."

"True, true!"

"So it is."

"Kodo!"

"White man," said the Granman, for the first time turning to us, "you have heard?"

REBEL DESTINY

641 over whom it was exercised. When the ancestors of the
[667] Bush Negroes were brought to New World slavery, what
measure of acquiescence they showed was due to the fact
that slavery was not an unfamiliar tradition to them. They
knew of the war captive, or the man convicted of a serious
crime, who was a slave to one of their own kind. But the
experience of the white man's slavery was a crucible in
which the ownership of man by man, and the unquestioning
obedience which men owed to those of higher rank, were
destroyed, leaving only the ideal of the life of free men.
"Free!" was the way in which one Bush Negro toasted
[203] another, or a white man, when he drank with him. A "*Man*
[621] *Nengere*," an adult Negro was, above all, a free man, and
it was as a freeman that he was governed, for though
villages had chiefs, and there were bassias who were sub-
ordinate to chiefs, and though above the village chiefs were
clan chiefs, and over them all the Granman, yet the final
word rested with the members of each subsidiary body,
and not with its leader.

624 Every village had its officials, and its medium for discus-
[622] sions. Every clan had its head, and its old men, who,
[614] sounding out the will of the clan members, consulted with
that head when questions were to be decided. For the
decisions affecting the entire Saramacca River, there were
[643] the Granman and his krutu, before whom questions of
[692] larger policy or disputes between villages were brought.

639 Perhaps most impressive of all was the measure of auton-
[614] omy which each village had. A village, or certainly a group
[609] of neighboring villages belonging to the same clan, formed
a small kingdom. A Bush Negro of another village who
came to visit, came as any stranger, paddle in hand, his
top cloth covering his loin cloth. When he found himself
in a strange village on a night when a dance was being
given, he did not join the dancers until after much urging
by a native of that village, and then he danced little, and
if he were a particularly fine dancer, he took care not to
flaunt his superior gifts. The exception to this, to be sure,
were the sacred dances, when a stranger, whose god came

THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS

to him when the drums called that god, could not be held accountable for what he did while his god had him in his control.

No stranger, no man who came to live in his wife's village, even though he had spent a good part of his life there, took it upon himself to offer advice to his wife's family. Again and again we would hear from men and women on the river, "In our village we do it this way," or, "We only carry the corpse on the head twice. Our spirits don't like to be troubled more often," or, "Mawu as a name for the Great God is used in our village, but not everywhere on the river."

There was the experience with several sacred images of village gods we had bought from an upper-river village. Our paddlers refused to carry them for us from the village to the boats, and it was with marked uneasiness that they permitted us to put them into the boats.

"We do not know what these gods can do. We do not know what is hateful to them. They are the gods of another people. We won't carry them."

But with the *gomi*—the child of the village of his mother's family, it was quite otherwise. He was a member of the village, he had a voice in its governing, he knew its gods. If he belonged to the family of the chief of the clan, if, let us say, his older brother were the chief, or if he was one of several nephews of a chief who had no surviving brothers, then at the death of the chief there would be a *krutu*, and the men of the village would decide which one of the several men who were eligible for the office was the most capable. Though rank was hereditary there was always selection among several heirs, and again the final word rested with the people of the clan. The offices of lesser chiefs—village chiefs who were subject to the clan chief, or *bassias* who served the chiefs—were passed on in the same manner.

While law making was in the hands of the chiefs, or captains, and the *krutu* over which they presided, law enforcement was the task of the *bassias*. It was they who saw to it that the orders of the chiefs were carried out. When

REBEL DESTINY

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"True, true, G'aman."

"Captain And'u, the gods sent the rain to cool everything when the Bak'a came. The gods of the river carried the Bak'a without mishap. We have heard of what the Bak'a has done. He has been at your country, at S'ei. He says he comes to learn. He says he does not come to buy wood or to work gold. What he says is good. Yet a full creek does not clear the bank of weeds. Tell us what the Bak'a did in your country, Captain And'u."

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"The Bak'a came to S'ei. All that was there he looked at. He walked about the village. His woman talked to our women. The Bak'a spoke with our men. He asked about the obias in the krutu house. His woman asked our women about their gods. What was the name of the wife of the Gran Gadu, he wanted to know."

With every sentence, came the affirmation of the chief.

"So I know."

"So it is."

"By Andol!"

"So I heard."

And'u continued. "The Bak'a knows the land of the Negroes—a *sabi Afrika*. With him he has a great book. In it he has pictures."

"True, true."

"There are pictures of obias."

"Ya-hai!"

"There are pictures of the Kromanti houses."

"So it is!"

"There are pictures of people who have the gods."

"*Kweti-kweti*—No, no!"

"Yet pictures in S'ei the Bak'a did not make. The Bak'a said, 'If your ancestors tell you not to talk, do not talk. But when you talk, do not lie!' That which we did not wish to be done he would not do, his woman would not do."

"Gbolo!" exclaimed the Granman, "this is as I have heard. Now the Bak'a has come up the river. His woman has light hair, she is as our Toné people. The river has treated the Bak'a well. The gods of the river have let the Bak'a pass."

[976]

THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS

Bak's pass. Friends, the river is more than I am. . . . Let us hear what the Bak'a has done on the river. Friend Kasanya, you have traveled with the Bak'a. Speak of what he has done." 609
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"It is as Captain And'u has said," Kasanya began, "what was forbidden, the Bak'a did not do."

The Granman interposed an objection.

"I sent a message to the Bak'a by the husband of my daughter. To him I said, speak to the Bak'a, say that at all villages on the Saramacca you will be received. But two villages have not walked well with the G'aman. At those you will not stop. Yet at one of them the Bak'a stopped."

"So it is, cunning master. This was how it happened. Darkness was falling. Everywhere was the big bush. A storm was on its way."

"So I know."

"There were no other villages near. The next one could only be reached after dark. There were bad rapids ahead."

"So I understand."

"The Bak'a woman was in the boat. To make camp before the storm came was not possible. We had a krutu. We spoke with the Bak'a. The Bak'a said we must go where we could find a roof."

The Granman grunted, was silent for a moment, then took up the story.

"Friends, night overtook the white man in the bush. He had a woman with him. The men said they could not make camp at night. The white man took his woman to where there was shelter. Into the village he did not go. At the first house he slept. Early in the morning he left. He does not know the river. The men brought him at dark to the forbidden village. The gods sent a great wind when the Bak'a crossed the river to show their displeasure, but the Bak'a and his woman they did not harm. The gods took it into their hands. The gods are more than I am." 623
801
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"So it is, G'aman."

"Friends, the children of the bush know what is done in the bush. Yet a man's lips must speak for himself. Let 609
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REBEL DESTINY

609 the Bak'a himself tell why he has come the long way to the
603 Saramacca river and what it is he seeks."

183 There was a general chorus of agreement, and silence
awaited our accounting.

As the town man began to repeat our words to the
Granman, the quiet of the house was heightened by an
occasional stirring outside the paling. From where we sat,
we could see brown motionless feet, which told us that there
were many more than those inside, who were listening to
the white man's reason for being in the bush.

Again the Granman made the traditional responses.

"So it is, white man."

"True, what you have said, bassia."

Finally our telling was at an end. Again there was a si-
lence as we sat, tensely waiting.

The Granman again broke the silence.

"Friends, chiefs, you have heard. The white man is here.
He comes to learn of our life. The gods of the river have
brought him and his woman safely. The Great God sent the
rain to cool the air when he reached Asindopo Lantiwe.
The gods are more than I am. The river is more than I am.
But the Saramacca people are also more than I am. It is
you, headmen of the Saramacca people, who must speak."

"Ai, G'aman," said the man who had the stripes of white
on him and who wore the many obias. "But have the
ancestors spoken?"

"Truly you ask, friend," was the response. "It is well
that you think of these things. In the bush, we think before
we speak. Do you go aside and consider well."

576 Slowly the members of the krutu arose from their
benches. Softly, with bent form, each passed out of the
doorway. We were alone with the Granman, who waited
with us for the reply of the chiefs.

623 As the elders slowly filed out of the council house, it was
693 as though a jury were leaving the courtroom to decide a
case which had been laid before it. And as we learned more,

WOMEN AT WORK

more than a year before her father's death and therefore had not saved her mother from mourning.

"My sons are big so," she showed, pointing to the mortar, "and already my brother takes them with him down the river, and when they are with him he tells them about the creeks and the trees, and where the villages are which are friendly to our people. But when they come here to see me, then they play. They have play guns and play arrows which they make themselves. Into the uncleared bush they shoot them until I call them away to eat. Here I have no man from whom they can learn. Here they only play."

But boys liked to be with men. When the rains came, her brother would let them sit by when he carved, and, seeing him work, they would take up a knife and begin whittling. That was how boys learned to do men's work.

Women children played with "gossi." She put down her pestle, and felt about in her cloth where the child slept, and brought out a gourd, resembling in size a small cucumber. It had beads on top for eyes and a few deft cuts to indicate nose and mouth, while above the eyes was crosshatching for the hair. Until girls were old enough to be of use in the fields, they sat about in the clearing playing with these dolls.

"When they are four and five, then they like to work."

There was, of course, dancing. All dances were opened by the children, and at six and seven the girls knew seketi and awasa, and bandamba, and the boys danced susa.

"Do you dance susa?" we asked the Granman's five-year-old grandson, who was standing with us beside the widow.

"Ai," he said, but once our attention was turned to him he said also, "White man, the children say you carry money in this." He touched a water canteen which hung from the stranger's belt. "I know it is water."

He knew also that shaving cream was soap, and not white people's sacred clay, and now as women came with bottles for the white man's obia water—a name they gave

REBEL DESTINY

856 to all the medicine we had for them—he took it upon him-
644 self to instruct them to wash the bottles carefully, as he
609 followed us to the storehouse, and to warn them that what
was given was not to be taken internally.

"*A taki, a taki-r, u' no mu' bebr*—He says, he is saying,
you must not drink this," he explained, with something of
his mother's persuasiveness in giving instructions.

His grandmother had said one day half in jest that he
would have a tiger spirit which would need to be reckoned
with when he grew to manhood. He was a straight-limbed,
[164] wiry child, not troubled with the umbilical hernia so often
met with in children here in the bush, or with the dis-
tended "cassava belly."

The coming of the strangers had eclipsed all desire for
[175] familiar diversions here. From early morning the children
of the village stood about watching us, so that the brushing
of teeth and the lacing of boots were carried on under
excited supervision which continued day after day. But to
this small grandson of Yankuso we were visitors in his
quarter, and whether we were alone in the council house
or were in the small house reserved for privacy, he would
find his way there and stand about asking questions.

Sometimes, however, when he found us at work and saw
that we did not wish to be interrupted, he would lean
against the wall for a long time watching us in silence, until
presently he would come to life, as it were, walk over to the
table, and begin beating the Kromanti rhythm on it.

856 But he was not the only child who knew the drum
533 rhythms. In the last village in the Pikien Rio, we met a
868 two-year-old child who came to us with more than usual
readiness and followed us about, his hand in ours until we
came to his mother's house, where he left us to sit down on a
wooden plank which lay near it. We had been in conversa-
tion with the older people and did not notice his going,
until all at once we heard the slow beating of the rhythm
to the Sky God. It was this child of two, drumming against
the plank on which he sat.

WOMEN AT WORK

"*A naki apinti, ai!*—He is playing the apinti," his father said, laughing, and a woman who stood by said that when he grew up he would have an important god. It would be a good god, too, and it might be a great Komfo—a priest reincarnated in him. 856 533 868

Among the little girls who were with us most often, and now stood by with Yankuso's grandson, were the two daughters of Dida, the wife of Chief And'u of S'ei, who went about the Granman's village with white on her face and body. The little girls were also washed in the white clay, and there was white in the wool of their hair. They had the quick, startled movements of their mother, and one of them in particular was a nervous child, shy and easily frightened. She never came too close to the strangers, and, for a time, if they but caught her eye, she would begin to tremble with fear. 857 [809]

"Your daughters are handsome, Dida."

"Ai, they come from a good line," she said, laughing. 776 868

The Granman's younger wife said, "They will have many gods when they are big. They will have them from their mother, and theirs will be stronger yet. They are twins." [845]

It was possible, she explained, by looking at a child to know if it would have the gods of the family. Sometimes the gods took a dislike to a child and refused to give it of their wisdom or protection, and sometimes the gods liked it so well that they gave it many gifts—the gift of a fine singing voice, the ability to dance better than others, and the good fortune to be liked.

"Until they are grown, the gods do not trouble them much," she added, "but we in the bush know a child who will have important gods, and we know if the gods will be kindly."

"Do you mean you know because of kunu?"

"*Ma kye*, all gods do not come from kunu."

One day when sitting among the women, the talk was of twins. 845

REBEL DESTINY

882 "Perhaps the women were wrong. She may not be a
891 woman yet."

"*Ma kye!*" Angita exclaimed. It seemed he knew better.

And there was the woman Amasina. She wore as many armlets and anklets of brass as the shy dancer, as many as the wife of the bassia of S'ei, whom the gods had prospered. Her cloths were of the finest, and in colors which were most often of yellow and blue stripes, with a thread of black interwoven, and another of twisted red and white. She was good-looking, but in her manner there was no smoldering challenge and no undue reserve. With ease she went from one group to another, and the women treated her neither with too much familiarity nor with restraint.

609 Amasina felt at ease, too, with the white people. In the bush they had an explanation for this feeling of well-being with strangers. If a man and a woman were both born on 581 the same day, they did not get on very well together, for they were both apt to have the same powers to grasp things which came within the province of the gods who also had come into the world on that day. Such a man and woman would at once perceive each other's mistakes or would be given to speaking continual warnings to each other. But there were days which were especially congenial affinities for marriages, and even friendships. These, we were led to see, were days which represented a male and female deity in the Bush Negro pantheon, whose mating had brought well-being to themselves and the living world.

"You and Amasina like each other, ai," they said in the village, and this friendship had a sequel of importance for us.

776 One late afternoon we were sitting with the women talking about the gods. Dida said the white on her body was for her god Kesekia. Chief And'u had washed her for her god when he was here in the village, and tomorrow she would dance. Kesekia, she said, was a Vodou god, who had come to her from the French shore. When he came to her, he spoke tongues; he knew French.

796 "Tomorrow they will play the agida drum, and I will put
797 a kerchief on my head tied so," she said, showing how she

REBEL DESTINY

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346 of earth which filled the rest of the hut. In the left-hand corner was a covered whitened vessel for the god called Kentina Dagowe. This Kentina Dagowe was a deity who was the offspring of the Dagowe snake, and the Apuku god of the bush whose name was Kentina. In him, as in so many other of the spirits, we found exemplified the Bush Negro's concept of the world which held that the gods mated as did humans, that all which stirred and had life came into being by such matings.

[773] Other spirits also came to this house, the woman went on. Mundewaya, another of the bush gods, was worshiped at the white-covered pot in the opposite corner, while beside it lay the vessel to which the spirit of a third might come. This one was the most powerful of all bush gods, and his name was Danhowao. There were other objects on the platform. Two stools, daubed with sacred clay, had their place there, and in the center was an image of wood, a rounded pot set on a base that tapered from the ground toward it, and this was to the Nanai, the ancestors.

The old woman said, "For the Apuku gods, we only play the tumao drum. The Apuku are mostly women's gods, but some men have them, and the men who have them play the drums. When the god comes to you, then if you are not too old you dance. But we old women do not dance. When the god comes to me, then I begin to shake. I go into this house on the day we call him, and they play the drum. Then I talk to the god. If I have something to beg of him for myself, or for someone else, then I put the pot which belongs to him on my head, and the drum calls him. When my body begins to shake, then it is the god. He has come, and when I speak it is not I but the god speaking."

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[203] From the clearing the talk of those who had remained outside came through the thin woven walls of the shrine. From one to another we could hear the news spread that in the village of the Granman across the river the gods had spoken for the whites.

In the hut, we listened to the old woman inside whose shrine we stood.

THE GODS SPEAK

"The openings in the wall there," she explained, when we asked her about the two squares cut into the wall behind the altar, "are for all things that fly. In this place they must come and go as they like. Bats come here, and insects of all kinds, and when they want to go back to the bush, they must be able to go as they like. That is the wish of the gods. So they told us long ago."

6

We were led from house to house. The gods had spoken. We were friends, and as friends who came not to harm, we were given the hospitality of friendship. There were other shrines, but we did not have to ask about them. They were pointed out to us with the other sights of the village.

The closed low hut near the Apuku shrine we had entered was to the river god Toné. It was a very small enclosure, and before it was a plant which covered the low entrance. It belonged, we were told, to an albino woman who was possessed by Toné. But she was not in the village now. Farther down the path was a larger house, another shrine. This had a piece of iron over the door and, when we asked about it, the girls who were following us ran, and the men merely said that it was the place of the Kromanti obia and passed on.

As we continued on our way, each woman was anxious not to have us slight the house her man had built her or fail to admire the carvings that were inserted into the weave of the palm walls. The huts were swept clean—the cleanliness of the entire village was even more striking than that of others we had visited—and but for a few stools, which were brought out for the strangers while they spoke with the old people who lived in the quarter, they were entirely bare. In every house, however, there was sure to be a shelf, large or small, or several shelves, on which stood prized food trays with carvings which covered both inner and outer surfaces. Combs and food stirrers were taken down and shown us, and the calabash dishes made by the women

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REBEL DESTINY

*Tutu calls, ye-o.
God is there in the river alone,
God Tutu calls,
Ye-o, ye-o."*

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So the young woman sang as she paced, her body twitching and quivering, while Dida repeated her exclamations. The man again took up his invocation to the gods, then resumed the soft tapping against the wood.

He said to us as he tapped, "My own god is Agida Wenowa. She is a Vodou god, and when I dance I put a parrot feather in my hair. When I play the agida, then all Vodou gods come. The agida is the drum for the Vodou gods."

As he spoke to the slow beating, yet two more figures came crowding in. We had been so intent on the two possessed women and on what the drummer was telling that, not until these new arrivals were at our side, did we notice them. One of them was Affi, the other Amasina. They were as we had left them, Amasina still in her white tunic and kerchiefs, her face and upper body yet more thickly coated with white so that only the eyes were alive, Affi still a grayish color, still anguished.

"We heard the voice of the god. We came."

But there was no longer room in the small shrine for the women to dance. The beating of the stick became fainter and fainter; the drummer no longer touched the skin which topped the drum. Fainter and fainter still came the beat, until the young woman who stood there without white on her body shook herself, as though she were coming awake. For a moment, all was quiet.

"He is gone."

"The god is gone."

"He has released her."

The drummer put back his stick. Slowly he lifted the drum; gently he stood the agida upright in its corner.

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In the Granman's council house, voices of people standing outside reached us. From one to another the news was told.

THE GODS SPEAK

The gods of the river had carried the whites in safety up the rapids, and the gods of the sky had, at the moment of their landing, brought rain to cool the earth and sent thunder to speak the greetings from on high. This morning a great snake deity and the god of the ant hill had declared that the strangers carried no evil for the people of the Saramacca. Across the river they had been in the shrines, and the great agida had spoken. They had not been harmed, even though strong Vodou gods had come. 776
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Inside the hut, we listened. We did not know the decision of the Granman's krutu, but the gods had spoken. This day, in any event, could not be changed.

REBEL DESTINY

123 609 So it went. The Granman was still a considerate host, but he no longer came to regale us with stories. He was disturbed. Again and again we were assured by indirection that our own motives were not doubted. But in what seemed to them our very foolhardiness in coming that distance, and because we had showed no fear, we had proved that we were being made use of by those who would later show enmity toward them.

When men came whose allegiance would go to any man in power, himself or the next man, the Granman would exclaim with all his splendid oratory that the black man's cause never could be that of the white man. To men of his own village, like the captain who took us down the river, he gave instructions that our every wish was to be met.

It was the way of the politician—and it was more than that. He showed in his manner when he was alone with us that he was deeply puzzled. As a man who had learned to trust his judgments of people, his pride would not permit him to grant that his wits had failed him. Then, too, what he had heard from us had fired his imagination. That he was skeptical of the ancestral revelation, we do not believe, but it was possible that, with the Bush Negro concept of the world of the dead, he might have felt that the great ancestors who were consulted remembered their days of slavery, and would, therefore, never consent to the revealing of secrets to the white man.

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123 199 It was our last night in the village of the Granman. In the council house more than thirty people were crowded, standing about the table on which we had placed the phonograph. The Granman sat in his folding chair and looked on without addressing himself to any one.

He had asked us to let all his people hear the machine. When we were gone, many people on the river would talk of it. He wanted all of his village to see how it worked.

REBEL DESTINY

533 surprised us that night at S'ei, and when he paused for a
196 moment the women took up the chorus. From one song to
199 another he went, and the hand clapping grew louder, and the
chorus joined in more frequently, often breaking into his recitative, so that there was harmonizing of theme and chorus.

Once or twice the Granman called for a song we had already recorded, in order to give Mapasi a rest.

"Play us something from the lower river, white man. Let them hear their own songs, too, sung by others."

When the excitement of hearing the machine reproduce the song they had just sung had grown less intense, the singers repeated the song the phonograph was reproducing for them, for to listen to music without singing was difficult for them, just as when they sang, they could not but move their feet, though there was scarcely more than room for them to stand one close to the other. But a Bush Negro needs little room for his dancing, so that as the phonograph played their songs for them, they clapped their hands and danced in place. For a short interval, at least, the existence of the whites was forgotten in their pleasure of singing with the machine.

Until late into the night we played our records for them, and they sang for us. Whatever the consequences to the frail records of soft wax, we decided to play as long as they would listen, because of something in the manner of the Granman, something of wistfulness, let us say, and something, perhaps, which went deeper yet, as he sat there—a black Hamlet following a mute soliloquy while he looked on with his clever, perplexed eyes.

"Ai, so it is," he said at last, "and now let us go and get sleep." He rose and the others followed him out of the council house.

II

123 Early the next morning, while the tent on our boat was
182 being finished, the Granman came into the council house
189 with a calabash and a buzzard's feather in his hand. He
579 came up to each of us in turn, and struck with the medicine-
609 dipped feather the tops of our heads, brushed the eyes,

GRANMAN MOANA YANKUSO

touched the palms of our hands, and struck against the calves three times.

"This is obia," he said simply, and when he was finished, he went out.

Our cook knew this obia. It was Opete obia, medicine bearing the name of the sacred buzzard. It was given us that we might have a good journey down the river.

"Did you see how he was careful to touch the eyes?" our cook pointed out to us. "The Opete gets the eyes when it comes to a person, just like Kromanti goes into the head, and Vodou into the belly."

When we went out for a moment, and walked toward our storeroom, we saw the Granman splash water out of a calabash onto the floor and front wall of the house which held our supplies. Was it that our belongings might be safe on our journey down? It was no time for questions, and we asked none.

Women and children again came crowding about the white woman. Though they had been warned not to talk, there was still something of the warm feeling of earlier times which a command did not entirely destroy. Then, too, the order was that the sendoff was to lack no formality. As we stood there, a dog came running down the path. He was on his way to the river. In his mouth was a large ball of something which had been thoroughly charred. It was an offering to the river spirits, perhaps. It might have been less pleasant magic. He had been sent by men who were busy in the ancestral shrine.

When the white woman called attention to the dog, and asked what he held, the women recoiled with amazement that she should have seen the dog at all. Part of the magic might have been, as it was in some formulas we recorded, that he was to pass by invisible to the strangers. But this is conjecture. . . .

The moment before we went down the path to the river, Amasina came up alone, and gave us her hand. She was gracious, and completely at her ease. Whatever was said, she had faith in her god Towenu, who had vouched for our friendship.

Chapter XV

THE ARTIST OF MA'LOBBI

I

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WE WERE recalled to the council house for a final informal krutu with Granman Yankuso and some of his elders before the more formal leave-taking on the river bank. Our boats were being loaded and soon we should be on our way down river. With the elders were the diviners, and our friend, the bassia.

The Granman opened the krutu, greeting and addressing the men who were present, until he turned to us.

"White man, you and your woman came to my village. I held you both well. Now when you are ready to go I give you my grandson for paddler, and the chief of my village for captain of your boat. That is how we do with those who come in friendship."

Through our town man, as was the way of the krutu, we spoke our acknowledgments to him, and our regrets that our visit was ending. Through our man, the last gifts to the tribal head were tendered, and through one of the elders, the ritual expression of thanks was returned us for what we had put before the Granman.

We had two favors to ask of him. For many days we had lived in this house, and had admired the fine carvings which the council house held. In our own country, when we thought of the days on the upper Saramacca River, a piece of carving from this house would give us much pleasure. But of the elaborate carvings we did not wish to

THE ARTIST OF MA'LOBBI

deprive him. Might we buy, however, one of the simple benches from the shelf above the door, which the chiefs and we ourselves had used many times?

The one we took down had interested us for its possible ritual significance. On its top a single design was repeated four times. It was a representation of an axe-head, and the clan of Yankuso was the Matchau, the Axe Clan.

The Granman looked at the diviner. "*Fa fo do?*—What to do?" was his query.

The man he addressed murmured, "*T'obi*—Trouble."

But it was, after all, only a small and slightly ornamented bench.

"Take it!" the Granman said. "What else is it you ask?"

There was the apinti drum. In the house where objects of all peoples of the earth were brought for men and women to look at, there were none of the fine carvings the Bush Negroes make. When we returned, we would place beside the African and Indian objects which were there those of the Saramacca people. As yet, we had not been able to buy an apinti drum. This one was more beautiful than any we had seen. Could he not sell it to us, so that everyone might know that the finest of drums had come from the council house of Moana Yankuso, Granman of the Saramacca people?

This time he did not hesitate. He smiled, and shook his head.

"No, no, white man," he said, "this drum is not for me to sell. This one I cannot part with, not for all your goods. Down river, when you visit my villages, you can get an apinti which will be beautiful. When you come to the village of Akunkun, and you see Kasanya, ask him to find you an apinti. I will tell Captain Mataibo to leave a message at other villages that you want an apinti. This one no gold can buy."

This was not our first attempt to buy an apinti drum. Nor was it to be the last refusal.

Waiting, we sat in the council house while our supplies were being carried to the canoes and placed in them, until

REBEL DESTINY

123 Mataibo, the head of Yankuso's village, who was entrusted
623 with the safe passage of our boats, came to announce that
574 the men had done loading. Before the morning was yet
609 well advanced we left the house, and with the Granman
[54] under his umbrella, which was the highest of insignia,
passed to the river bank.

Our friends were there—the bassia, and Dida, and Amasina, and the Granman's wives and his little grandson, who shouted to us, "*Waka bon, ye'e!*"—Travel well, you hear!" in the best manner of his elders. Again three guns sounded, and once more we were on the river, looking up at the people of these villages of the Pikien Rio who were waving to us from the shore.

502 Going down the river was restful. The enjoyment of the easy motion of the boats was felt in the manner of the paddlers themselves. Now there was no hard poling against the heavy current. As canoes were urged on the two paddlers wielded their long blades in unison, and the dugouts swung downstream in the center of the river, where the current was heaviest. When the murmurs of the rapids ahead were heard, it was but a moment until they grew into a roar, and then, in another, we were through, the man at the front standing up for an instant so that, with a twist of his paddle, he might turn the head of the boat from any threatening rock, while the stern man did not stroke at all, but merely held the craft on the course which was marked where the water tossed itself into foam-capped waves. Sometimes, as we came to rapids where the force of the water was especially strong, or there was a sharp double curve to be negotiated, the two boats would pause for a moment while Mataibo called out to the younger men the course to follow. Then into the falls, and through them, and our bow paddler would carefully rearrange his loin cloth and sit down once more to take up his steady stroking.

123 Opposite one village Sungi came in his boat to meet us,
609 to give and receive a final gift, and say his goodbye. But
831 it was not to the landing place of Dahomey that he took us
for this interchange, but to the village of his wife, he told

THE ARTIST OF MA'LOBBI

us when we asked him. At one landing place where we stopped for a moment, we could hear the drums sounding the rhythm to the river gods, but the drumming stopped abruptly as word went back along the path that white people had come. Men streaked with pemba came down to the river to look at the Bakra who had visited the village of their Granman.

In the boat, we missed Bayo. The grandson of the Granman, who was our bow paddler, we had met but casually before we had started. There had been none of the chances for conversation that had made of Bayo a friend before he and his great-grandfather came to take us to the country of the Granman. Later we would come to know this youth for a pleasant young man, capable and quiet, who was proud to show his ability, and quick to resent the suggestions of our town man in such matters as making a shelter for the night.

"We are children of the bush!" the young man exclaimed sharply. "We know how to make this." And such a good shelter did the paddlers build that men of a near-by village, who passed, stopped and asked that it not be torn down the next morning, as had to be done with shelters erected for the night on the land of a strange clan, but that we should let it stand so that others might use it.

When we asked him questions, however, or made observations on people who passed by in their canoes, he gave us noncommittal replies. Mataibo, the captain of our boat, was even more reserved, though he liked to twit our town man, and in an unofficial capacity would have been amusing. Conversation between the two paddlers, or between them and the two young men who were entrusted with our other boat, was in the clipped, rapid "deep-Saramacca" speech which, in spite of our use of it in conversation at the Granman's village, we still found it difficult to follow when Bush Negroes spoke informally to one another.

As the day wore on, we began to get used to the rapidity with which village after village was passed. Here was the landing place of the one where we had stopped so that

REBEL DESTINY

48A Sedefo might greet his sister. It was almost a half-day's travel, going up river, from Asindopo Lantiwe, yet it was not quite noon, and we were passing it. Here was Hei Kununu, its steep slopes already swinging into sight as we rounded a bend of the river and came through the small rapids above the settlement, and still it seemed as though we had but begun our course down toward our base camp and the railhead. And it was still early in the afternoon when we came to Ma'lobbi.

2

462 At the landing place, women were about. Much of the work of the Bush Negro woman is at the river's edge, and for strangers like ourselves, passing in a dugout, the presence of women working on the bank was the only sign that here was a landing place, and that farther inland lay a village. To the river they came with their carved clothes beaters, like the one we could see in the hand of the woman who greeted us here at Ma'lobbi, fashioned, as we later learned when she sold it to us, in the shape of a male vodu head on one end, and a female snake on the other. It was at the edge of the water that a woman scraped cooking pots and calabash dishes with sand, and it was here, if it seemed a good day for fishing, that a woman would go wading in the water to rest a cooking pot on the river bottom, and stand silently until an inquisitive school of small fish swam into it when, with a quick jerk, she would bring it up to take out what fish there were. This, aside from the use of small hooks, was the only kind of fishing a woman could do, for the fishing traps were for the use of men. But the cooking pot brought in many small fish to add flavor to a dish of rice.

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609 As we walked into the village, accompanied by one of our younger paddlers, the bassia greeted us. The head of the village was waiting for us, he told us. Paddlers of small boats on their way downstream had spread the word that our visit with the Granman was drawing to an end.

THE ARTIST OF MA'LOBBI

As we walked toward the chief's house we looked about ³²²
us, seeing again the evidence that here at Ma'lobbi there ⁵³¹
were men who knew how to carve wood, seeing why it was
that our paddlers had spoken of it as a place for fine work.

"Ai, at Ma'lobbi they are good carvers."

Here was a house with its doorposts elaborately carved; ^[342]
there a beautifully worked rice tray, lying where it had
been left by the woman who owned it, until she should need
it later in the day for winnowing her rice; farther along a
great bench stood, with the designs cut through in a fluid
progression over top and sides.

The captain was in the lower portion of his two-story ¹²³
house when we entered. Several of the older men, who had ⁶⁰⁹
been present at our earlier visit and who remembered our
gifts of tobacco, came to join us, as the news of our arrival
spread through the village. Soon the women were standing
about, motioning to the white woman to come with them.

The house in which the captain received us was larger and ³⁴²
more imposing than the others in the village. It was his ⁵⁵⁶
gudu-wosu—his treasure house. Its lower portion, where we
sat in conversation with him, was where he worked. Above,
where none of his wives might enter, his wealth was stored.
Here he kept the pieces he had carved, and from here drew
from time to time the presents he gave his wives. Here
lay the wealth which his nephews would inherit when he ^[408]
died. But below, in the partially open shelter, was his ^[302]
workshop where he fashioned rough logs into stools and
paddles, combs and food stirrers, trays and canoe seats,
and all manner of objects which he and his women used in
their daily routine.

All about the walls hung tools. There were machetes, ³⁴²
whose sharp blades showed a reflection of fire from the sun ³⁵³
which slanted on the wall. We had never seen so many of ⁴¹²
these bush knives on display, nor, for that matter, such an
array of tools anywhere on this river. From projecting
boards or nails driven into posts hung several compasses,
their hinged arms sharp-pointed, so that the craftsman ^[413]
might describe the perfect circles on the wood he carved.

Chapter XVI

BAYO, THE PLAYBOY

1

IT HAD been a day of hard travel, down the Mamadam, through the Musumba Prati, and down the long wearying stretch of quiet water until we reached the Tita Buka Falls. The memory of the up-river passage of these troubled stretches had not yet worn down sufficiently to allow of contemplating the downgoing without a measure of strain, but our anxiety turned to astonishment when the paddlers, skirting above the thunder of the water, steered the boats into a barely visible channel down which we floated by easy stages. 507
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"Mati-o," said chief Mataibo to the young men, when we had made the singularly fine passage, "the gods are taking them with pleasure. We must do the same!"

Passing the Gran' Creek he prayed from midstream, calling on the spirit of the creek, whom he addressed as ancestor, to give us long life in our white man's country. 782

Now we were here at Djamungo, at Bayo's village where, if he were only there, we should be seeing a fine dance, and where, what at the moment was far more important for us, many sacred objects awaited us. Djamungo was a village about whose magic other villages on the river were uneasy. 789
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"Bayo is at Gankwe waiting for you. He is helping the men haul lumber, but when he hears you are back, he will come," said a woman who came up saying she was his 609 ●

REBEL DESTINY

609 mother. The woman who had made Bayo was her sister, she told us.

142 The resemblance between this woman and Bayo was marked. She had the same dark skin, the same stocky, muscular build, the broad nose, the same general cast of features we had known so well in Bayo. Similar, too, were the sharply etched scars on her face, which were so black and so prominent as to bespeak her great vitality and rugged health. There were other likenesses, we learned, and of these the most valued was the strength of their gods.

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522 We had not been long in her hut before we noticed the iron arm-band she wore. It was, we knew, a "tapu"—a magical preventive which, in this instance, warned its wearer of danger, and kept her from harm in a combat. Seeing it on the arm of a woman was astonishing for many reasons. Not in all our encounters on the river had we seen a woman wearing an arm obia of iron. Iron was the sign of the Kromanti, a men's group, composed of those men who had the Kromanti spirit. It was in part warriors' secret society, and in part, when it was Obia Kromanti, the men's religious society which controlled the powerful supernatural forces of preventive and healing magic which played so prominent a part in the spiritual life of the Bush Negro. Now there were, we had been told, some women who inherited the Kromanti spirit, but these were few, and not until after their menopause could they enter a Kromanti house, and when this came they were too old to participate in the dance, but they sang the songs when the spirit came to them and did whatever else was known to the initiated of their years.

1353 But this woman who was Bayo's mother's sister was not an old woman. As she talked to us, in fact, her breast was swung over to the side, and against her ribs was the head of the child on her back who was nursing. Yet on her arm was the fighter's "tapu," as the emblem of membership in the Kromanti group.

This was so important an anomaly that, following the etiquette of the bush, we hastened at once to talk about something else.

BAYO, THE PLAYBOY

"Bayo has asked me to find a strong arumani for you," ⁹⁸⁹ she said, naming the obia she held with the word for such magically endowed properties used by the Ashanti today, on the West Coast of Africa. In rapid succession she gave us the African words of the Kromanti designation for the white clay, for the ancestral pot, and for several other ceremonial objects we discussed with her.

"Did you make these for us?"

"Ah, no. Women do not make obias. My brother made them for you." [200] [201]

The next morning when we were leaving Djamungo she came to the landing place with us. In our hands were the images we had bought. The young paddlers looked on them with fear. Of no account would they even come too close to us who carried them. It was not the image, nor the external properties of a sacred object which disclosed its power, but rather the magic that had been called to reside in it, and the strength of the gods of him who had been instrumental in bringing the magic to the figure of wood, the brass bell, the cowrie shells, the ant-eater's bristles, or whatever else was used.

"Tell them in your village," Bayo's mother's sister called after us, "that here at Djamungo the Kromanti spirit does not come to men only. When women get Kromanti, they, too, can fight."

2

We had not been back at our base camp for more than a day when Bayo came up the path calling the greeting of a comrade. Had we fared well with the Granman? 514
604

He had, he told with pride, seen all those things a man who went on so long a journey should see, and he had been to Lamé again, where there were strong obias and where the women knew how to love. Now he would remain with us until we left the bush, and he might even decide to go with us to the city, and from there to the French shore, where there was money to be got. What with the money he had earned for timber, and the money we had given 115
526

REBEL DESTINY

OOO "About half of them, I guess," he said.

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609 When we returned to camp, Kasanya waited for us. He had come with the game boards he had promised to make for us, the adjii game which was played in the house of death, and which the fine carver in Kasanya's village could not make because he was young, and a man needed to have a wife under the sod before he was fitted to make it.

Kasanya had taught the white man to play the game the year before, and though the white man had had much practice in playing it at home, Kasanya won one game after the other with ease.

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561 With the white woman he would not play, nor would any other man—not even Bayo who showed so much indulgence toward the strangers. It was this way, Kasanya explained. A man knew that a woman could not beat him at the game, much less a woman who did not have the cunning of their bush, and would not, therefore, be expected to excel in what pertained to the life of the bush. But if the gods became capricious and allowed the white woman to win, then it would be more than a man could bear to be twitted up and down the river about it. Songs would be made up about it, and stories and proverbs. Master Nigger! A man would be a fool to risk it.

524 When Kasanya had gone, Bayo came back from Gankwe where, it seemed, his errands now took him daily. The sun was still high enough so that a game might be played before the hovering ghosts who in life had enjoyed the game would take their places beside the players, and play unseen at this game board with the living.

"Do you play adjii, Bayo?"

"Awai! Suma no de!—Sure! No one better!"

But it soon appeared that Bayo had brought too much self-confidence with him from Gankwe. He was promptly beaten, and beaten again.

"Suma de, Bayo?—Someone better?"

The boy grinned.
"Suma de, ai," he acknowledged.

[304]

REBEL DESTINY

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1787 The next day was our last among the Saramacca people. Bayo came to us early to help with the packing. He was apparently none the worse for his seizure and, as he worked, we could tell from his manner how release had come to him and how the tension we had noticed the past few days had left him.

On his body were no marks. His mouth showed no cuts where the glass was bitten off and chewed. When we told him about the glass, he knew nothing of it. Had he not known about this eating of glass, he might well have doubted our word, for when we examined his lips and palate and tongue, not even a scratch showed.

"What did you drum last night, Bayo?"

"When, before the obia came to me?"

He remembered nothing after he had leaped from the improvised apinti to run into the bush.

"Not when you drummed apinti, but when you came back here and took the tumao to the river."

"I don't remember. Did I do that?"

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1789 Despite the early hour we had to leave in order to catch the weekly train for the coast, the boats of our friends began to be seen off the landing place as they came to say their farewells. The good woman Tita, whom they called Mother Snake behind her back, was the first to arrive. She walked slowly up from the river bank, pipe in mouth, a pot on her head, and one in each hand. The pots held obias which, she said, were made especially for us, to give us great powers in our own land—one to keep us safe from the ghosts of those we had wronged; one to guard us against the acts of the unfriendly living; one to make all those from whom we sought advantage "love" us.

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[BSA] Sedefo's younger wife came with her child on her back to collect whatever tin cans were about, and some gift for the child when it wakened, knowing that something was

Introduction

xi

happened to cover a fraction of the Djuka territory, so familiar to Dr. Kahn.

We lived for a time at the Djuka village of Moengo Tappo, and from there visited other villages on neighbouring rivers and creeks. And there I felt again the sharp contrast between the primitive and the civilized. Through the Djukas, I saw civilization in perspective; and especially I saw that tragic phase of it which passes through prison gates.

Djuka life makes us stop to think all over again about everything. It makes us see what we have gained, as well as what we have lost.

There is, for example, no nonsense about white superiority among the Djukas. They are proud to the point of savage arrogance. Hatred and distrust of the white man are as much a part of their inheritance as is their jungle lore. As among the Negroes of Haiti, you must win your way. But when you are finally accepted, not as a superior being, but as an equal, then how warm and charming a thing their friendship is!

The Djuka farewell to us is a beautiful memory. As we passed down the river, between walls of forest where orchids were in gorgeous blossom, the Djuka villagers came down to the water's edge to say good-bye, raising their hands high and bowing low to bring down blessings upon us.

Indirectly it was these Djukas who introduced me to Dr. Kahn. At the time that we were in the Guiana forest Dr. Kahn was in another part of the same jungle, though neither of us knew of the presence or the existence of the other. Later, after our return to New York, our common interest in the

Djuka

361 river floods periodically, and might wipe them out if they
were too near, and that the Bush Negro still retains, back in
his mind, a strong fear of another war with the white man.
In the latter event the Djuka villages would have to be
camouflaged or hidden. Often, too, the villages are to be
found just above a waterfall or rapids, as another hindrance
to possible invaders.

646 At the landing we see bare-breasted Djuka women washing
649 clothes or bathing their children. They do not evince much
[57] curiosity as we paddle up, for it is considered insolent to
stare. The naked little ones are very much afraid of the white
man. They scurry into the underbrush and watch us from be-
hind trees. The older children remain and are proud of their
courage. An old man is making a canoe. Most of the men are
away on hunting or lumbering expeditions.

361 Leading up to the village is a winding path, cut by the
646 violent rain until it resembles a ravine. Sometimes the river
floods the path, forming a little muddy inlet into which the
canoes stick their noses. One town is perched on a high bank,
[41] reached only by a hardwood ladder twenty-five feet tall. The
blacks clamber up easily, unlike the awkward white man,
who has difficulty with the missing steps.

We ascend the path; the frightened children return to their
play, paddling about or fishing from the moored canoes.
201 Sometimes the bahkra's coming has been announced before-
646 hand by a system of drum telegraphy. A certain rhythm
[534] beaten on the tomtom informs the adjacent villages that
white men are coming up the river, and why. In this way

The Jungle Clearing

45

is used as a living-room; cooking is sometimes carried on ³⁴² there, but more often in an open communal kitchen used by the entire village. Some towns have several such open sheds. ^[342]

We enter the hut where the headman of the village lives, ⁶⁴⁸ and find him lying in his hammock. It is perhaps a bit of ⁶⁰⁴ conscious arrogance, to demonstrate his independence of the ^[352] white man, that the captain does not rise to greet us. He rises, however, to greet Abaisa.

"Well, friend, how are you?" we begin. In talkee-talkee the question runs: "So, matti, fir you tang?"

He replies civilly, complaining a little, perhaps. We offer him a few leaves of tobacco, always acceptable. While we parley with the chief, the men of the village are carrying our equipment up from the corials to the village. This they always do, without being asked and without being paid. Even small children take part in the portage. Nothing is ever stolen.

Quite conscious of the heat inside the dark hut, we do not ⁶⁴⁸ palaver long. Leaving the two chiefs lolling in hammocks we ¹⁸⁴ pass out of the breast-high doorway into the clearing, and go about examining the living-quarters and the people. This is a village of the Saramaccaner tribe, descended from the Saramacca rebels of two hundred years ago. All the huts and villages of this tribe are quite similar. Among the Aucaner tribe, descended from the Ouca rebels, are villages of a different type.

One does not doubt the good intentions of the Moravian ⁷⁹⁷ Brothers and certain Catholics who have established missions at a few points on the rivers. But their evangelical efforts have

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Djuka

437 The reply is short and spirited.

"Gimme."

Which does not have to be translated.



574 We sleep that night in the Bush Negro village. A dilapi-
dated hut is assigned us, the hut of a dead man. There are
tarantulas on the cross-poles; we are not particular. The pad-
dlers sleep elsewhere, being taken into friendly huts about
the village. Except for the ghosts of the departed Bush Ne-
groes, our hut is quite empty. The hammock is slung and the
mosquito netting put in place. Mosquitoes and insect pests
are not as bad in the jungle as commonly reported. They sel-
dom caused us any discomfort. It is true that one of the boys
contracted malaria during an expedition, but the parasites
may have been dormant in his blood for some time pre-
viously. Our precaution against malaria was ten grains of
quinine sulphate each night before retiring under the mos-
quito netting.

512 Far into the evening the Negroes will sit around the camp-
fire and tell stories, their loud, musical Negro laughter car-
rying a long distance on the night air. Walking by each hut
we see a tiny light flickering inside. Occasionally an infant
cries. We sit before our doorway, amusing a group of chil-

112

Djuka

322 *The small Paramacca tribe does much less in the way of*
wood carving than do the others of the Djukas. This was
evidenced by the few pieces we were able to collect and was
also known to be a fact by the Aucaner Bush Negroes who
accompanied us to the Paramacca district. The motifs dis-
played upon the articles collected were practically identical
with those found on Aucaner pieces.

123 In fairness to the Paramaccas, however, it must be men-
tioned from our experience among other tribes that collecting
is much facilitated when one is cordially known. On a second
or third expedition one is able to collect many times more
specimens than upon a first introduction. The Bush Negroes
are at first shy as a rule and not anxious to part with their be-
longings.



184 The tribes do not fraternize much with each other. Some
619 travellers report that the Aucaner and Boni tribes feel them-
609 selves superior to the others because they have less contact
with the white man. If this is true, we cannot report any
personal observation of it. A traveller has no more difficulty
among them than among the Saramaccaner people. Some
628 ill-feeling between the Aucaners and Saramaccaners dates
609 back to the slave revolt, when the former observed their peace
treaty so scrupulously as even to aid the slave-owners in re-

The Organization of Life

113

gaining possession of other fugitives. It is said that, until recently, actual war prevailed among the tribes because some Saramaccaners invaded the Boni and Aucaner districts, poaching on their lumbering, hunting, fishing, and balata rights. The punishment today for any Bush Negro found poaching in another district is a healthy beating with canoe paddles and fists, after which he is warned not to repeat the offence. 628
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With the Indians of Surinam the Bush Negroes have little commerce or intercourse. These aborigines belong principally to three American tribes, the Carib, Acaaway, and Arawak. They and the Djukas mutually look down on each other, but in our opinion the latter are intellectually the superior. Indian and Djuka villages are separate; very little trading occurs between them. On the Marowync, Tapanahoni, and Lawa Rivers, however, the Negroes occupy a strategic position on the middle rivers, so that Indians from their remote villages along the upper river must pass by Bush Negro towns on their way downstream to trade at the white settlement of Albina, near the mouth of the Marowync. The Djukas tell the Indians that the white men in Albina practise cannibalism. Rather than run the risk of trading with cannibals, the Indians barter their stuff in the Bush Negro towns. By this crafty arrangement, the Negroes obtain bead and feather work in exchange for tobacco and for machetes. 648
[637]

The Indians on the other rivers do not share this superstition concerning the white man's cannibalism. None of the Indian tribes mingle with the Djukas other than for the pur-

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Thereupon follows a second, who just like the first has a calabash in hand, but this time filled with spirituous liquor, and from time to time sprinkles a few drops of it on the ground, in token of the fact that on this occasion, too, by means of drink, they think of the deceased with joy.

Then they again return to the dwelling, where all are gathered, and celebrate an enjoyable night with song and dancing until daybreak.

Chapter XII

Character, Virtues and Vices

157

[577] The Bush Negro, as I have already said above, has a great deal of respect for old age and for distinguished persons; with respect to their closest relations they are honest, which they cannot pride themselves on otherwise. In their ordinary affairs they are not lazy, but work tirelessly whenever it is necessary. With respect to strangers they are generous and obliging, all the more when they can assume that they may claim reward. Jealousy, envy, and malice are their greatest vices. Concerning many matters they have an antipathy that they call trefoe (treef). Thus, [461] for instance, one will eat something, the other not. Also they are very superstitious in small matters, to which they cling all the way down to distant generations; they call that obia (literally translated, bewitchment, magic).

262

[123] An Auca girl who through attachment to my wife and me has already lived with us in the town for fully five years, because since the death of her husband, who was one of my most trusted [589] workers, she did not want to attach herself to another, and who performed all kinds of housework for us, carries her trefoe of not eating any unscaled fish so far that she will not even cook her food on a fire where there is a pot in which an unscaled fish was previously prepared. I know another one who uses no milk and also does not eat meat of any kind (with the exception of bacon), unless it be game, and then it must be prepared by her, on the grounds that everything is prepared with butter and that butter comes from

/43 cont. /

114 of the true foundresses and the circumstances of the formation of
613 the lineages (invaluable information which must still have been
present in the memory of the old men at the end of the last
century) are lost forever.

128 In order to simplify the drawing up of the genealogical
601 tables, we have eliminated individuals deceased before adult age.

128 Names. To insure the necessary anonymity to our informants
551 without diminishing the accuracy of the statement, we have
601 changed a large part of the names. The fictitious names under
162 which individuals are designated in the genealogical tables as
[101] well as in the inventory of the population were mostly taken from
the Djuka, who belong to the same cultural and linguistic group;
in other cases, in order "to figure" the census we used a more
complex process consisting in exchanging the names of two per-
sons. Children younger than 15 are designated simply by an initial
(1).

[648] 1. It is particularly disagreeable
to the Refugee Blacks to have their
children's names known by
Europeans, with the exception of
[123] the doctor. All systematic question-
ing on this subject runs into clear
hostility.

114 Despite these precautions, we recommend that travelers
• 609 provided with this work make no allusion in front of the Boni to the
facts related in it; the Refugee Blacks are very proud and cannot
allow an outsider to penetrate forthwith into their family privacy.
That would provoke lively hostility toward the indiscreet person
and would hinder later work.

114 The table of correspondence between true and fictitious
128 names is held at the disposal of sociologists who may wish to con-
duct studies on the Boni.

/297 cont. /

648 which in Black Africa has so powerfully contributed toward the destruction of traditional structures.

[829] Truth to tell, the problem was simpler, for the conceptions of the Refugee Blacks, involving no form of oppression of individuals and assuming the right of the woman to self-determination, reduce to the vanishing point the sources of disputes between individuals and groups.

[162] In 1946 the administrative post of Maripasoula was created, near the confluence of the Lawa and the Inini. Since that time, the gendarmerie has administered to the satisfaction of all and without any incident a heterogeneous population of 2,000 persons, gold miners, Refugee Blacks, and Indians, scattered over a vast territory. The medical post created at Maripasoula in 1949 is very much frequented by the Boni and performs an extremely useful function on the psychological as well as on the social level.

[505] The relations of the various groups give rise to very small frictions, one with another, but the Refugee Blacks never give occasion for intervention in the internal affairs of their groups. Respectful of the administration, they carry out punctually their commitments to their employers, insuring all the transport on the river according to a modus vivendi established for a long time (1).

• 609

On this subject it is to be noted that disagreeable incidents occur each time the Boni deal with inexperienced travelers who do not know the customs of the river or do not wish to apply them. In a general way the Refugee Blacks, of their own accord respectful of anyone who comes to do a useful job, loathe tourists; they cannot stand being photographed or observed like queer animals.